

SUTTON ALMOST PINCH A POINT

By "CHILTERN"

Wycombe Wanderers 3, Sutton United 2.

WYCOMBE Wanderers went so close to losing a point to Sutton on Saturday. With memories of their injury-time-equaliser when the sides met earlier in the season still fresh in their minds, the Sutton forwards threw all they had into the last minutes of the goalless second-half at Loakes Park.

But Wanderers, playing as if they had eaten an overdose of Christmas pud a week early, held on to their slender lead. There were as many holes in their defence as in a pound of crumpets and the Wycombe supporters were reminding referee Burns of the time a good five minutes before the end.

By taking chances that were presented, Wycombe earned a first-half lead. The first goal which came from Len Worley was a particularly good effort, almost rivalling his goal that kept the Wanderers in the F.A. Cup at Guildford.

It wasn't that good — but it was good. Collecting the ball some 50 yards out on the right wing he went through on his own, beating several defenders. Seeing there was nobody in a better position than he was himself, he thumped the ball hard past the startled Bateman.

That was in the seventh minute. Eight minutes' later Eladon equalised with a long shot after he had been allowed to manoeuvre.

REGAINED LEAD

It took Wanderers just two minutes to regain the lead. Bates was awarded an indirect free-kick just outside the penalty area. Feigning a hard shot he cleverly chipped the ball over the Sutton defensive wall, and Tony Horseman, nipped round to shoot before Bateman could gather the ball.

Yet Sutton never looked a beaten side. They were allowed so much room to move it seemed inevitable they would score again — and score they did. In the 31st minute Bladon, unattended on the corner of the box, tried a long shot. The diving Maskell was

only able to clear it to the feet of Blunt, who equalised.

Sutton adapted themselves so much better to the swamp-like conditions. Time and time again Wycombe's fairy-touch passes sloshed to a halt in the deep mud, whereas the visitors banged the ball hard.

Wycombe's winner came in the 35th minute when Les Merrick, who had a fine game, met a Worley centre with his head, giving Bateman, who was hurt in the incident, no chance.

BEST FORWARDS

Merrick and Worley were Wycombe's best forwards. Horseman was a passenger from the 18th minute, when he pulled a hamstring, and Bates, captain for the day, played as if he did not want to hurt his old clubmates — he used to play for Sutton.

Samuels had an off-day, working hard but seeing many of his efforts go to waste with the final pass.

John Beck also put in some graft, even going through to shoot or centre on several occasions, and once winning a corner.

Maskell, in the Wycombe goal, was immaculate, making several second-half saves that kept Wycombe in the game.

Bates had one good shot in the second-half, which was well saved by Bateman, and the Sutton 'keeper made a wonder-save to Worley late in the game.

In a last-minute effort to help their goal average Wycombe were unlucky not to score.

In a concerted attack several forwards had a go before Taylor headed a Horseman shot off the goal-line.

From the clearance Sutton swept into attack, their dangerous inside trio combining well, and Wanderers' fans were more than relieved to hear the final whistle.

Wycombe.—J. Maskell; D. Bradshaw, J. Beck; B. Baker, I. Rundle, C. Gale; L. Worley, K. Samuels, P. Bates, T. Horseman, L. Merrick.
Sutton.—C. Bateman; D. Gamblin, R. Taylor; E. Powell, D. Grade, A. Hawkins; R. Brooks, T. Bledon, K. Blunt, L. Prichard, R. Warnes.